
Subject: Travel While On City Business
Policy No.: 500-0001
Effective Date: 7/27/2015

PURPOSE:

To establish and provide guidelines for authorization and administration of travel expense reported by the City of Woodstock employees, appointed and elected officials. The City of Woodstock has a responsibility to carefully account for public funds, to manage municipal finances wisely, and to plan for the provision of public services.

OBJECTIVE:

- Uniform and fairness to all travelers
- Conservation of public funds
- Providing a level of comfort while traveling that allows business to be conducted in a dignified manner.

I. DEFINITIONS

Training – Shall mean any work related program, seminar, conference, convention, course or workshop attended by an employee whose expenses are funded in whole or in part by the City of Woodstock while the employee is in a paid status with the City.

Employees – For purposes of this policy shall mean both elected officials and regular full-time and part-time personnel.

Local travel – Shall mean travel within the incorporated City limits of the City of Woodstock, Georgia.

II. POLICY

Administration

- I. Employees are expected to search out the most reasonably priced arrangements for their travel event, taking into consideration their personal safety and a reasonable level of comfort and dignity.
- II. Travel arrangements that include air, lodging and/or car rental should be made as far in advance as possible, preferably at least 30 days prior to the travel event, to ensure the most economical and desirable arrangements.
- III. An employee traveling on appropriate and pre-approved business will not be denied reimbursement for reasonable costs incurred in conformance with this policy.

Guidelines for Authorization of Travel

- I. Decisions as to which travel is authorized begin with the budgetary process. Travel needs must be anticipated and submitted in the annually adopted budget for approval by the Mayor and Council.
- II. The authorizing party's responsibility is to stay within his/her departmental budget's travel allocation, as approved by Mayor and Council, and to complete in full the travel forms with all necessary funding information specific to their department and acknowledgment of budget verification is checked.
- III. Prior to approving a travel request, the authorizing party is responsible for determining that a sufficient unexpended appropriation remains in the travel budget to reimburse all expected costs of the travel.
- IV. Expense reports must be prepared to reflect only actual expenses essential to the conduct of City business by the employee.

Travel

The City shall reimburse expenses incurred by elected and appointed officials and employees for travel relating to official business of the City. A travel reimbursement form is required for a reimbursement of travel expenditures and/or exceptions to this policy.

(1) Lodging:

All traveling personnel shall minimize the expense associated with hotel costs by contacting the hotel directly to make reservations, possibly retrieving a lower rate for qualified stays.

If an employee, appointed or elected official is attending a conference and the conference site is located at a hotel site, it may be economically feasible for an employee to accommodate lodging at the host hotel for the conference, to relieve cost in other areas (i.e. travel to and from conference site, parking fees).

If cancellation is needed, an employee must do so in enough time allowing funds to be reimbursed to the City. If an employee has used City funds for lodging and the funds cannot be reimbursed, the employee is responsible for reimbursing the City all fees. Only during extreme circumstances shall the employee not be responsible for reimbursing the City. An explanation shall be provided by the employee and approved by the employee's Department Head. The City Manager, and/or Mayor and Council are subject to review the circumstance and provide the final decision.

(2) Transportation:

Authorization of the mode of travel shall be by the most economical means. Modes of transportation include vehicle, air, rail, taxi and any form of public transportation. The method selected by the traveler shall be the most economically feasible, taking into consideration the value of time. Use of a personal vehicle for local travel will not be reimbursed.

- a. **Mileage** - miles traveled in privately owned vehicles shall be reimbursed at the rate designed by the IRS. The Mayor/City Council may establish a rate lower than the IRS rate as a result of limited budget availability for travel. Mileage shall be calculated using the employee's place of work or employee's residence (lesser of the two) as the origination point and destination point on the traveler's itinerary. Excess mileage will not be reimbursed, only reasonable travel within the origination and destination point may be reimbursed upon proper explanation. Normal wear and tear expenses associated with an employee's personal vehicle such as fuel, oil, tires, etc. shall not be subject to reimbursement by the City, as they are already included in the IRS rate.
- b. **Rental Cars** - expenses associated with rental cars, i.e. rental expense and fuel, will be paid at cost based on valid receipts. Employees shall rent full size or smaller vehicles based upon the number of employees needing transportation. Expenses associated with exceeding this car class will be the responsibility of the traveler, unless reasonable explanation is provided.
- c. **Air/Rail** - transportation provided by major airlines or railroads shall be paid at cost to the traveler. Travel will be limited to coach/economy classes of service. A change to a higher class (business or first class) or extension of the trip and change in departure or arrival dates resulting in an added cost will be the responsibility of the traveler. Any reduction of expense associated with transportation costs as a result of extended or modified travel dates for personal benefit shall not be provided back to the traveler.

If cancellation is needed, an employee must do so in enough time allowing funds to be reimbursed to the City. If an employee has used City funds for air/rail travel and the funds cannot be reimbursed the employee is responsible for reimbursing the City all funds. Only during extreme circumstances shall the employee not be responsible for reimbursing the City. An explanation shall be provided by the employee and approved by the employee's Department Head. The City Manager, and/or Mayor and Council are subject to review the circumstance and provide the final decision.

- d. **Taxi/Shuttle/Public Transportation** - expenses associated with local transportation will be deemed eligible for reimbursements as long as receipts are provided with point to point explanation for this mode of transportation. Such documentation should accompany receipts.
- e. **Tolls/Parking** - traveler shall be reimbursed for toll and parking charges. Receipts or any form of explanation are required for reimbursement.

(3) Meals/Incidentals:

Expense associated with meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) shall be administered on a reimbursement basis by the City. Actual meal expense will be reimbursed up to the maximum allowed reimbursement meal rate. Maximum reimbursable meal rates will be as follows:

- Breakfast \$10.00
- Lunch \$15.00
- Dinner \$20.00
- Daily reimbursement not to exceed \$45.00

Meal rate advances to the employee prior to travel shall not be provided. The Reimbursement is set as a maximum amount for travel.

Room service is permissible as part of the reimbursement rates as set by this policy. Travelers should remain within the allocated funds for meals when using room service.

(4) Credit Cards/Submission of Expenses:

Each traveler shall pay for expenses associated with travel on a personal credit card. Travel advances shall not be issued for any reason.

Employees issued a City credit card should typically use it to pay for expenses associated with approved travel. **Upon return, a travel expense report must be submitted to the Finance Department with itemized receipts attached. If receipts are not submitted, the employee shall not receive reimbursement from the City for the related expense(s).**

Any funds used through a City credit card in conflict with this policy shall be returned to the City. Within **30 days** of the final day of travel, all receipts for items, with dates and description of the service or item purchased must be submitted to the finance department for verification purposes. Failure to provide the appropriate documentation may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

(5) Miscellaneous Expense:

Expenses such as printing, copying, and Wi-Fi usage is for business use only and should be coded as “miscellaneous expenses” on the expense report. These expenses shall be obtained at the most economical rate.

(6) Non-reimbursable items:

The following are non-reimbursable expenses:

- Personal Entertainment
- Personal phone calls
- Traffic and parking tickets
- Theft, loss, or damage of personal goods
- Personal care items

- Alcoholic beverages
- Expenses of family members

The above items are not eligible for reimbursement, under any circumstance. If any of the above listed expenses is used and charged to a City Credit Card it is the responsibility of the City elected/appointed official and employee to reimburse the City of such funds.

Receipts are required for:

- Lodging
- Meals
- Air/Rail fare
- Baggage Fees
- Car Rental
- Taxi/Shuttle/Public Transportation
- Tolls/Parking

Acceptable receipts must be itemized; containing transaction date, name of merchant, item purchased, and indication that the amount was paid by the person requesting reimbursement.

Receipts are not required for:

- Mileage

Exceptions

Exceptions and variances to this policy are subject to the approval of the Mayor and City Council.